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INFO RUMJIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 3959

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR TH BM

SUBJECT: BURMA ARMY SHELLING OF THAI VILLAGE

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6551 (B) BANGKOK 6091

1. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF MAR 28 THAT "REPRESENTATIONS"-- AND HE STRESSED THAT THEY WERE NOT A PROTEST NOTE--HAD BEEN MADE TO GUB RE SHELLING OF BAN WANG KHA (REF A). SOURCE NOTED THAT REPORTS OF INCIDENT WERE STILL PRELIMINARY. IT WAS NOT KNOWN, FOR INSTANCE, WHETHER OTHER SHELLS HIT THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER AND JUST A FEW WENT ASTRAY OR WHETHER THE HOWITZERS WERE AIMED AT THAILAND. THAI HAD ALSO ASKED THAT SHELLING OF THE AREA BE STOPPED BY THE GUB. MAR 28 BANGKOK WORLD CARRIED ARTICLE STATING THAT SHELLING OF BURMESE SIDE OF BORDER HAD RESUMED, BUT MFA SOURCE WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM OR DENY STORY.

2. BURMESE EMBASSY OFFICIAL DURING MAR 28 CONVERSATION ON SAME SUBJECT TOLD EMBOFF THAT THAI REPRESENTATIONS HAD BEEN MADE IN RANGOON. HE SAID THAI HAD ASKED FOR COMPENSATION FOR LIVES AND DAMAGES, AND HAD REQUESTED THAT SHELLING CEASE. NOTING THAT THE VILLAGE ON THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER WAS ALSO KNOWN AS WANG KHA, HE WONDERED HOW MANY OF THOSE KILLED HAD BEEN THAI AND HOW MANY KAREN. HE THEN SOMEWHAT INGENUOUSLY BUT APPARENTLY SINCERELY ASKED EMBOFF WHETHER THE THAI WERE REALLY UPSET ABOUT THE INCIDENT. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THAI OFFICIALS HAD APPEARED THUS FAR TO BE RESTRAINED IN THEIR REATIONS, BUT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES IT WOULD BE HARD TO PRESUME THEY WOULDN'T BE SOMEWHAT UPSET.

3. EMBOFF MENTIONED THAT VISIT BY FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT TO RANGOON IN JANUARY HAD APPARENTLY BEEN THAI ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. "YES, TO PATCH UP THINGS," INTERJECTED BURMESE EMBOFF. EMBOFF WENT ON TO ASK WHETHER BURMESE

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EMB OFF THOUGHT ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA WOULD BE POSSIBLE, AS WAS MENTIONED IN PRESS REPORTS OF THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER THANIN (REF B). BURMESE EMBOFF SAID THAT THANIN HAD BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT DURING AN INFORMAL LUNCHEON ON QMR 17 WITH THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND. BURMESE EMBOFF STATED THAT NARCOTICS ERADICATION WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO THE GUB, AND HE THOUGHT THAT SOME SORT OF COOPERATIVE EFFORTS COULD BE WORKED OUT. PROBLEM WAS, OF COURSE, THAT MANY OF THE AREAS WHERE OPIUM GROWING AND TRAFFICKING TOOK PLACE WERE "NOT VERY SAFE FOR BURMESE".

4. COMMENT: NUMBERS KILLED AND WOUNDED AT BAN WANG KHA ARE STILL UNCERTAIN. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AT FIRST REPORTED BETWEEN 25 AND 50 KILLED, BUT FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT STATED TO PRESS ON MAR 27 THAT 14 HAD DIED. MFA SOURCE (MENTIONED PARA 1) TOLD EMBOFF THAT IT WILL BE SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE WHOLE STORY IS KNOWN. MEANWHILE, BANGKOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY NATION REVIEW REP@)RTED MAR 28 THAT PRESIDENT NE WIN HAD EXPRESSED "GRAVE CONCERN" OVER THE INCIDENT. ACTUAL COMPENSATION FORMALLY REQUESTED BY THE THAI MAY, HOWEVER, MEET WITH SAME SOMEWHAT SCEPTICAL ATTITUDE AS EXPRESSED BY BURMESE EMBOFF. WHITEHOUSE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS 0194, TH, BM

SUBJECT: BURMA ARMY SHELLS HIT THAI VILLAGE

REF: A) FBIS BK181007Y MAR 77 B) FBIS BK241551Y MAR 77

1. BANGKOK PAPERS OF MAR 25 HEADLINED STORY FROM BAN WANG KHA IN MAE SOT DISTRICT, TAK PROVINCE, REPORTING THAT MAR 23 FIGHTING BETWEEN BURMA ARMY AND KAREN DISSIDENTS HAD RESULTED IN DEATHS OF BETWEEN 25 AND 50 THAI VILLAGERS WHEN BURMA ARMY REPORTEDLY OVER-SHOT NEARBY KAREN STRONG-HOLD AND HIT BAN WANG KHA. (BAN WANG KHA IS LOCATED ABOUT TEN KILOMETERS NORTH OF MAE SOT TOWN DIRECTLY ACROSS THE MOEI RIVER FROM THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE 101ST KAREN NATIONAL UNION (KNU) FORCE. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOR) SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT PRESENT ESTIMATES ARE THAT NOT LESS THAN 40 MILLION BAHT (\$2 MILLION) DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE TO BAN WANG KHA. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT NUMBER OF VILLAGERS KILLED REMAINS UNCERTAIN BECAUSE FIRES IN TOWN HAVE NOT YET BEEN EXTERMINATED. ABOUT 100 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INJURED, SOME SERIOUSLY, AND THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE KNU AND BURMA ARMY CONTINUES. BANGKOK RADIO (REF B) SAID THAT ON MAR 24 TAK PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES HAD SENT LETTER TO BURMESE REQUESTING THEY CHANGE DIRECTION OF SHELLING IN ORDER TO AVOID HITTING THAILAND. AT TIME OF RADIO BROADCAST, HOWEVER, SHELLING AGAINST KNU CAMP WAS REPORTEDLY CONTINUING.

2. MOI SOURCE SAID RTG WOULD PROBABLY SEND GUB A PROTEST NOTE ASKING FOR COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES. HE NOTED THAT INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED THREE YEARS AGO IN SAME AREA (WHEN IN MARCH, 1974, KNU FOUGHT GUB AT MYAWADDI, JUST ACROSS FROM MAE SOT TOWN, AND TWO THAI WERE KILLED BY STRAY BULLETS) HAD NEVER BEEN COMPENSATED FOR, THE BURMESE EXPLAINING THAT IN A PERIOD OF EMERGENCY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREVENT SUCH INCIDENTS. HE SAW THIS SITUATION AS BEING DIFFERENT, HOWEVER,

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IN THAT GUB HAD LOBBED 105 MM ROUNDS INTO THE THAI VILLAGE AND DESTROYED VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE TOWN. MOI SOURCE SAID THAT WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM BURMA (BOTH KAREN AND BURMESE) HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO CROSS THE BORDER, BUT THAT KNU TROOPS INVOLVED HAVE THUS FAR REMAINED IN BURMA. HE NOTED THAT THAILAND WAS ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH BURMA, AND IT WAS THAILAND'S POLICY TO PREVENT BURMESE DISSIDENTS FROM RETREATING INTO THAI SOIL.

LG
3. MOST RECENT SERIES OF CLASHES BETWEEN KNU AND GUB TROOPS BEGAN MAR 10. ACCORDING TO AFP REPORT FROM HONG KONG (REF A) THAT KAREN FORCES HAD FLED TO THAILAND FOLLOWING A CLASH ON MAR 16, SOURCES AT THAILAND'S INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC) ALSO STATED THAT BECAUSE THAILAND DOES NOT WISH TO SEE A DETERIORATION IN RELATIONSHIP WITH BURMA, KAREN SOLDIERS WOULD BE DRIVEN OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO CONFIRM WHETHER OR NOT KNU TROOPS HAVE ACTUALLY FLED TO THAILAND, WE FEEL THAT, GIVEN LIMIED NUMBER OF THAI SECUTITY FORCES ALONG BORDER, IT WOULD BE DIFFICUTL TO ENFORCE THE EXLUSION OF KNU TROOPS, EVEN IF RTG SO DESIRED. WHITEHOUSE

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